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Folkmann, Mads Nygaard

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The Transfigurative Mode of Romantic Discourse: Poetic Models in Novalis, Keats, and Stagnelius

Mads Nygaard Folkmann

A dominant feature of Romantic literature is the wish to transgress the given reality or, more precisely, to challenge and alternate the ways to both perceive and conceive reality. The literary text may not *per se* change reality, yet it can suggest transformations indirectly by constructing new models or modes of seeing and comprehending. In this essay, I raise the question of the principle of *transfiguration* as a way of dealing with the Romantic desire for a radical transformation of perception. This will be conducted by exploring three poetic models made explicit in the work of the European Romanticists Novalis (1772–1801), John Keats (1795–1821), and Erik Johan Stagnelius (1793–1823). The first two authors can be seen as representative of two major manifestations of European Romanticism, namely German and English; my last example, Stagnelius, is not very well read outside the Scandinavian countries, but is still an exemplary author in his own right, demonstrating a unique angle on what is called 'Romanticism'.[1]

The principle of transfiguration within a Romantic context has its background in the poetics of *productive imagination* and its ability to transcend a given reality. Therefore, I will begin with a sketch of the Romantic notion of productive imagination. But, as I will show, the pure ideology of imagination *as* productive is not enough to understand the workings of transfiguration in Romantic texts;[2] the ideology must be 'poetized' if we are to comprehend the demands of the specific text when it presents itself as a *riddle*, that in the words of Adorno points out "den Übergang dorthin [...], wo das Kunstwerk abbricht" (188) ("the passage in that direction [...] where the work of art breaks off").[3] Thus, art in general displays a riddle of communication where signification ends. In this sense, a central characteristic of the transfigurative mode in Romantic texts is a *displaced representation* with allegorical traits: the texts point to meanings beyond themselves that are neither, as in the traditional concept of the allegory, solely to be found in the content of an already given pretext, nor are they, as in the negative-critical conception outlined by de Man, entire displacements of meaning in a "pure anteriority", which produces the allegorical sign's "distance in relation to its own origin" (207); rather, the transfigurative mode appears as an allegory in the Benjaminian sense. For Benjamin, allegory only produces its meaning in and through itself as a temporal structure of expression and convention that transforms "Dinge und Werke in erregende Schrift" (352) ("things and works into inciting writing") with meanings of their own that differ from the original, textual starting point. In other words, when art presents itself as a riddle of communication, according to Adorno, the work of art cannot directly present any analytical, conceptual means to solve this riddle; rather, the only way of dealing with the riddle is for the work of art to indirectly indicate its own nature, and thus suggest a direction for solving it through concretizing the riddle at work and displaying the basis of its principal insolubleness. This identification of the constitutional difficulty of the riddle produces in Adorno's understanding a certain gaze of art, a "Blick, mit dem die Kunstwerke den Betrachter anschauen" (185) ("gaze, with which the works of art are viewing the viewer"). This reversal of gaze, when the artwork looks at us instead of we at it, can in my perspective productively be understood in connection to Romantic aesthetics, as they posit a demand of being understood in such a way that transgresses understanding.

1

That productive imagination is a founding factor of Romanticism is well known. It stands, of course, at the heart of Romanticism in England, but it also has the impact of a pan-European trend, finding its way to Germany in the form of Kant's and Schelling's philosophical discussions, as well to the Scandinavian countries where it finds debate, especially through the Swedish periodical *Phosphoros* (1810–13) (as an equivalent to the German periodical *Athenäum* (1798–1800)) by exploring new possibilities of aesthetic thinking and communication through specific genres, e.g. the fragment.[4] My point is that the discovery, or rather the highlighting, of a productive-creative faculty within consciousness leads to a new *dynamic* of human apperception with consequence for a view of reality. Equally important is the rise of imagination within Romanticism, whereby it follows Kant's epistemology outlined in *Critique of Pure Reason*, which in turn generates the rise of a new kind of anthropocentrism that on the one hand radically places the human subject at the center of knowledge and thereby negates any pre-given conception of metaphysics,[5] and on the other is eminently self-reflexive; that is, there is in the Romantic concept of productive imagination a knowledge of the dangers of being posited itself as a sort of creative center of the universe in place of God.[6] In its dynamics, imagination is not only, as stated by Coleridge in his famous 'definition' expressed in the thirteenth chapter of *Biographia Literaria* (1817), a faculty that "dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to re-create; or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still it [the imagination] struggles to idealize and to unify" (1.304). It also leads to the principle of an ever-changing transformation, like "die schöne Verwirrung der Fantasie, [...] das ursprüngliche Chaos der menschlichen Natur" ("beautiful confusion of the imagination, [...] the original chaos of human nature", 86), to quote from Friedrich Schlegel's *Gespräch über die Poesie* from 1800 (204).

The imagination is thus the common starting point of transformative dynamics. To specify it we must distance ourselves from ideological statements on creative productivity and instead focus more narrowly on the poetic articulation of the imagination and on the function of *poetic imagination* in literary texts. Instead of asking how artists can be creative through employing productive imagination, or how they can be megalomanic in the belief of their own creative powers—in the end a very private

question—we need to consult the literary texts to engage the actual workings of imaginative transformation and transfiguration at play. Romanticism has a philosophical basis shown very clearly in the case of early German Romanticism, *Frühromantik*, yet it comes to itself as Romanticism through a *literary turn*; thought is important, but still more its representation, its *Darstellung*. As Novalis writes in his *Fichte-Studien* with a critical view on the philosophical notion of identity: "Wir verlassen das *Identische* um es darzustellen" (II.104) ("We have to leave the identical in order to represent it"). Interestingly, this means the opposite of an abandonment of the principle of identity; it signifies a precise awareness that it is only possible to credibly speak of identity when staging a certain rhetoric of representation that doesn't lead directly to issues of identity but instead reveals a necessary path of hermeneutical implication as well as complication. To grasp the dynamics of imagination is, thus, not only to reproduce its ideology of pure artistic productivity which, of course, in the time of the Romantics functioned as means in a cultural politics (this is very clearly the case with Coleridge) and of distancing oneself from the former normative poetics of the Augustan Age or the more rigid parts of the Enlightenment. Instead, imagination is employed in developing a new kind of non-normative, non-mimetic *literary aesthetic* in the search for new possibilities of representation.[7]

In literature the transformative dynamics of imagination work as a principle of transfiguration. Transfiguration tautologically signifies transformation, but in this context it is to be understood literally as a given figuration that in some way is transgressing itself in order to reach a new and higher kind of figuration—a kind of freedom from traditional conceptions of the world (this also is a product of the anthropocentric thinking of imagination). Such freedom leads to a poetics of the *impossible possible*, where everything, in principle, is possible and where the new possibilities put to work through imagination often lead to an endless search for an impossible utopian. Poetic imagination is often employed to elevate reality as in Novalis's expression, to 'romanticize' it, where the mundane is granted higher meaning: "dem Gewöhnlichen ein geheimnißvolles Ansehn, dem Bekannten die Würde des Unbekannten, dem Endlichen einen unendlichen Schein" (II.545) ("the usual [receives] a secretive appearance, the known [receives] the dignity of the unknown, the finite [receives] an infinite radiance"). Inversely, and this is important in grasping the Romantic poetics of *Darstellung*, this process doesn't just reach for some region of higher meaning, but requires its complement in a 'common expression' where "das Höhere, Unbekannte, Mystische, Unendliche" ("the higher, the unknown, the mystic, the infinite") is 'logaritmisized' (II.545), that is, put into finite form.

II

In the essential non-symmetry of the relation of the given and the higher, the immanent and the transcendent, the finite and the infinite, which leaves the infinite, higher perspective beyond the boundaries of the given and thus of representation, the poetics of Romanticism faces its deepest problems. These are the source of Romanticism's inexhaustible dynamics—and the very reason that we will never finish exploring the enigma of Romantic discourse. Novalis demonstrates a method of open dialectics with 'romantisizing' and 'logaritmisizing', but still the question remains of how to conceive the possibility of an 'impossible beyond the possible', or to be more precise, of how Romantic texts deal with the category of the impossible.

In a recent reply to Adorno's aesthetic theory, the German philosopher Martin Seel dwells on the relation of the possible and the impossible within the frame of the work of art. Seel criticizes Adorno for thinking that the "Möglichkeit des Möglichen" (Adorno, 200) ("the possibility of the possible") tends toward utopian transgression; that is, the possibility of the possible for Adorno touches upon the work of art's ability to make constellations of the given that at the same time show the direction of an utopian impossible. For Seel, the impossible isn't something categorically different from the possible, just a possibility that hasn't yet been realized and identified as such. In this sense, Seel conceives the work of art as "Operationen, die es vermögen, die Konstellationen des für möglich und unmöglich Gehaltenen zu verändern" (69) ("operations capable of changing the constellations of what is conceived as possible and impossible"). In providing a new consciousness of the reality of the possible and of the possible in the reality (70), the work of art can alter the relation of what is real and what is 'just' possible and thus offer a new kind of perception of reality, letting the presence of the present (in a Heideggerian sense) present itself in new ways.[8] It is true that many Romantic works seek to challenge the perception of reality and, like Wordsworth for instance, allow perception to be circumscribed by the influence of a

remembering as well as a self-generating, essentially productive imagination. But still, Seel misses the idea of communicating the impossible that lies at the heart of a certain part of Romantic discourse. Of course, not all Romantic texts seek the higher in the sense that I am exploring here. I am concentrating more on a specific, but nonetheless important, part of Romantic literary discourse that is precisely formulated by Novalis: "Sinn für Poësie" ("sense of poetry") is presenting "das Undarstellbare" (III.685f.) ("the unrepresentable"). Even though Seel does have a point when he states that an utopian idea would lose validity if it cannot be realized, that is, not integrated into reality (65), it is important to maintain that speaking of a transfigurative mode in Romantic texts implies keeping the utopian as categorically utopian or impossible; and that this creates the *tension* of many Romantic texts: that they attempt to configure a structure of speech that aims beyond speech itself, a 'beyond' that carries the paradoxical constitution of being at the same time outside speech while indirectly influencing it. This is another way of conceiving Adorno's 'riddle of communication' in the work of art: *something* that is placed outside the work of art that categorically must remain outside the sphere of communication of the work of art *still* finds its way into the work of art as a guideline of where the work of art necessarily breaks off because it cannot contain the utopian *per se*. In early German Romanticism this paradox is reflected within the concept of 'Romantic irony', both as a critical awareness that it's always possible to say 'more' than speech allows and as concrete guidelines of a rhetoric of endless approximation to the impossible where the creative artist, in a double process of what Friedrich Schlegel calls in his Lyceum fragment No. 51 (109), "Selbstschöpfung und Selbstvernichtung" ("self-creation and self-annihilation"), tries to push to the boundaries of representation.[9]

In order to understand the potential of utopian transfiguration in Romantic literature, we must also understand how this is inextricably bound within the limits of the literary text. In this respect, the effects and workings of transfigurative literature can be mirrored in Maurice Blanchot's suggestively radical conception of literary communication. In his central work, *L'espace littéraire* (1955), Blanchot speaks of a certain kind of "presence of being" in the work of art that posits itself as an event (228). In communicating, the work of art doesn't transcend time in order to present a spiritual essence or entity. Rather, it figures an impossible communication:

> ... through the work there takes place in time another time, and in the world of beings that exist and of things which subsists there comes, as presence, not another world, but the other of all worlds, that which is always other than the world. (228)

Blanchot's aim is to evolve a phenomenology of the literary, not in the sense of Roman Ingarden's intention in his classic study *Das literarische Kunstwerk* (1931), which presents a phenomenology of the literary artwork's structures of (positive) communication, but in the sense of investigating what kind of experience is produced in the text when all 'real' meaning—and 'reality' as such—disappears inside the text. Blanchot posits a negative understanding of a basic linguistic function: saying anything means displacing, dissolving, and erasing the object of the spoken but, unlike a more simplistic kind of deconstructive strategy of reading, he does not solely state the negativity of language as a blockage of referentiality where the textual meaning dissolves in rhetorical structures that convey only their intra-linguistic significance. Instead, Blanchot insists on a specific experience within the literary medium that functions 'other than the world' but still in its own right. Blanchot's theory has, however, the tendency of enclosing every aspect of literary communication within the literary text—the potential as well as problematic aspect of his theory.

Regarding the utopian potential of Romantic texts, the point is that it can be productively understood as part of a radical *otherworldliness* figured by the literary text, not just within the boundaries of literary communication but also at the brink of literary communication. The utopian transfigurations of Romantic texts are not only bound to be textual and always limited compared to the extension of an extra-textual reality but they also try to challenge the borderline between text and reality. The structure of this utopian kind of literary communication can be seen in light of a magnificent fragment of Novalis, the *Vermischte Bemerkung* No. 16: "Wir sind dem Aufwachen nah, wenn wir träumen, daß wir träumen" (II.416) ("We are close to awakening when we are dreaming that we are dreaming"). Novalis is imagining a possibility of reaching outside the dream when inverting the dream upon itself, that is, *within* the space of dream we seek to *transcend* the dream itself. This, in my opinion, can be understood in relation to a transfigurative potential of literary aesthetics in Romanticism: all kinds of figurations of any utopian tendency that lies in the character of literature can never transcend litera-

ture and simply *be* reality, but can pose inside the negatively laden space of literature as 'other than the world' in the sense of Blanchot, a structure of impossible meaning that can try to alter the conditions of literary communication and in this way, through the literary text's process of inversion upon itself, reach outside literature.

In the context of the texts of Romanticism, I suggest that this structure of a withheld utopian meaning can be analyzed as a doubleness of two operational factors within the texts: a function of unrealization and a function of producing transfiguration by putting forward aesthetic schemata. The function of the unrealization is rather obvious: to place an object within literary discourse is to loosen its actual connection with the present world of given things. On the notion of consciousness, Jean-Paul Sartre has explored the unrealizing powers of imagination producing the imaginary as a "position d'absence ou d'inexistence" (32) ("position of absence or non-existence") in a pure negation of reality; in the context of literature, this operation is slightly altered, as literature on the one hand puts things in absence but on the other lends them a new kind of (problematic) presence as literary figurations.[10] Thus, this provides the basis for putting forward new configurations of unrealized objects through the aesthetic schemata of the text, employing art as means of 'multi-realizing' the world, understanding it in new ways, and positing new models for seeing and comprehending the world. Art in this way functions as an epistemological tool. In this manner, Roger Scruton speaks of "imaginative perception" (150) in art as a specific way of transcending the ordinary perception of the "stricktly given" (98) and thus proposing an "aspect perception" through imagination that opens up for an intentional and self-reflexive "seeing as" (108f.) which, in seeing differently, produces new meaning. The problem that Scruton does not take into account is that this 'new meaning' within a Romantic context transcends its given figuration, thus producing a transfiguration. The point is that Romantic texts, on the basis of the unrealizing powers of literature, attempts to 'see' in the light of a higher meaning that at one and the same time is a part of the text *and* is standing outside of it in a challenge to what seeing is. In another note Novalis speaks of a "poët[ische] Theorie der Fernröhre" (III.410f.) ("poetic theory of binoculars"), where the binoculars metaphorically stand for the view into the ungraspable infinite: the binoculars focus the gaze, let the infinite be a part of the scope of seeing,

and at the same time maintain the categorical difference and remoteness of the infinite.[11]

In relation to these reflections I sketch out three poetic models each arising from its specific cultural and historical contexts, but in the end reavealing many similarities. In the case of Novalis and his novel *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* (1800–01), emphasis is placed on the kind of utopian integration that is a distinct feature of early German Romanticism, and in which Novalis operates as an endlessly progressive dynamic of transformation. Further, John Keats, by contrast, formulates his view of transformation in the poem "Lamia" (1819) as a balance of skeptical disillusionism and poetic exploration of the ontological possibilities of the energy of transformation. Interestingly, both authors connect the notion and operation of transformation in their works with the ocular metaphor of vision, suggesting that transformation transgresses vision in search for the visionary. Whereas Novalis in some respects is rather explicitly utopian, Keats on the other hand doesn't employ the same philosophical vocabulary, nor does he demonstrate the same interest in philosophical conceptualization; yet, within his own anthropology of human existence as a locus of unavoidable sufferance and pain, he attempts "Guesses at Heaven" (4), to use an expression from *The Fall of Hyperion* (1819). Stagnelius stages in the poem "Endymion" (after 1821) the complexities of dream and reality, where the dream functioning as a container of signs of a transcendent realm must always remain deficient to reality but still try to get its way into reality, partly through a process of sensual intensity.

III

Novalis's novel *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* is a poet's *Bildungsgeschichte*, written as a critical reply to Goethe's bourgeois educational narrative *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (1795–96). In the beginning of the novel, Heinrich dreams about the blue flower—a key Romantic topos—and subsequently sets out on a journey in order to become a poet. However, Heinrich doesn't simply become a poet (at no point do we see him as poet), nor does he ever conceptualize himself as one. Further, Heinrich does not seem to be a psychologically plausible character like Wilhelm in Goethe's novel; rather, he is de-psychologized and appears as a 'thin' or 'flat' character. The point is that Heinrich is a medium for the novel's

comprehensive ambition of becoming itself a medium for greater integration of the finite and the infinite, of the singular and the absolute. This process of integration is structured by the idea of endless searching as can be seen in Novalis's first *Blüthenstaub* fragment—the very first text in which Novalis designates himself in public as 'Novalis', 'the one who creates new land': "Wir suchen überall das Unbedingte, und finden immer nur Dinge" (II.413) ("Everywhere we're searching for the infinite, always we're finding just things"). Importantly, this illustration of endless searching both states the impossibility of grasping the infinite and insists on staging it as a directing impetus for the search. Further, this infinite should not be thought of as confirmation of a traditional metaphysical transcendence, but comes foremost to itself in and through the very process of searching. Novalis, here, insists on defining metaphysics, as revealed in the novel, as an experience of the absolute that cannot be uttered in a meta-discursive, conceptual language; rather, it comes to take the form of *inner* experience, which for Heinrich is difficult to access, and is only made available through a process of never-ending approximation.[12]

There are two basic devices at work in the novel's attempt to not only challenge the boundaries of representation but also to produce a transfigurative structure of meaning. The first evolves in the novel's rhetoric of dreaming, the second in the function of the narrator.

First, Heinrich's dream about the blue flower not only inaugurates his endless process of searching to become a poet but has in itself a function of *letting in* another dimension of reality that remains transient and punctual. If we focus on a point in the middle of the dream before Heinrich actually sees the blue flower, we find Heinrich located in a complex interchange of inner-sensation and ever-new, transforming scenarios:

> Es dünkte ihn, als umflösse ihn eine Wolke des Abendroths; eine himmlische Empfindung überströmte sein Inneres; mit inniger Wollust strebten unzählbare Gedanken in ihm sich zu vermischen; neue, niegesehene Bilder entstanden, die auch in einander flossen und zu sichtbaren Wesen um ihn wurden, und jede Welle des lieblichen Elements schmiegte sich wie ein zarter Busen an ihn. Die Flut schien eine Auflösung reizender Mädchen, die an dem Jünglinge sich augenblicklich verkörperten.
>
> Berauscht von Entzücken und doch jedes Eindrucks bewußt, schwamm er gemach dem leuchtenden Strome nach, der aus dem Becken in den Felsen hineinfloß. Eine Art von süßem Schlummer befiel ihn, in welchem er unbeschreibliche Begebenheiten träumte, und woraus ihn eine andere Erleuchtung weckte. (I.196–97)
>
> (Then a cloud tinged with the glow of evening appeared to surround him; feelings as from Heaven flowed into his soul; thoughts innumerable and full of rapture strove to mingle together within him; new imaginings, such as never before had struck his fancy, arose before him, which flowing into each other, became visible beings about him. Each wave of the lovely element pressed to him like a soft bosom. The flood seemed like a dissolution of the elements of beauty, which constantly became embodied in the forms of charming maidens around him. Intoxicated with rapture, yet conscious of every impression, he swam gently down the glittering stream. A sweeter slumber now overcame him. He dreamed of undescribable events, and was awakened by more lightening.") (25–26, last line modified)

After having experienced a sequence of events where, quite impossibly, an inner sensation not only lets 'new imaginings' evolve but where these images also materialize around Heinrich as simultaneously visually clear and transient—the last to be seen in the many distancing expressions as "wie", "schien" and the temporal moment of "augenblicklich" that also suggests the non-permanence of the vision—the paragraph breaks off and a new one begins with the narrator's discrete reflection about Heinrich's dreaming. He is placed in a sheer incompatibility of experiences; he is at *once* "Berauscht von Entzücken" *and* "doch jedes Eindrucks bewußt", that is, his consciousness is displaced, whereby the boundaries of his subjectivity are altered and this displacement is situated within the sphere of consciousness. In this way, the text opens up a new space where Heinrich can experience the impossible within the medium of the silent dream-vision. This is, however, not the final step. After this passage, Heinrich is dreaming that he is dreaming. As in the mentioned fragment on the intensified dreaming's figuration of a new awakening, Heinrich also gets closer here to a dimension of experience that seems inaccessible but thus is prefigured. The point of this dream within a dream is that it focuses on a cusp of concentrated meaning that cannot be qualified in any way; its events are described as simply 'non-describable' and thus completely out of reach for the reader. The point is that this intensified dreaming indicates a certain punctual unity of the events of the dream; that is, the word 'unbeschreiblich' points to a synthesis of events that cannot be grasped in any other way than in the form of an

inverted dream. Through this intensified dream the novel shows a dimension of impossible meaning that the rest of the novel tries to unfold and in the end suggests a new way of experiencing reality.

Important as well is the dream's energy that keeps the dream itself moving on. This concerns the blue flower as the *telos* of the dream. On the one hand, Heinrich's dream is, up until the moment where he faces the flower, loosely connected by a metonymic chain of nature scenes, the one in a narrative *vision avec* leading to the next without any apparent guidance of the flower. On the other hand, the flower, as Heinrich reaches it, reveals itself as exactly the *telos* of the dream. The flower, though, does not unexpectedly appear in the dream as Heinrich has been told about the flower the evening before, which then turned on him "unaussprechliches Verlangen" (I.195) ("unutterable longings", 23). The flower had, in this way, always been the implicit *telos* of the dream and thus, when Heinrich faces it, it reveals itself as the founding *metaphor* and the hitherto hidden principle of unity for the dream: "Was ihn aber mit voller Macht anzog, war eine hohe lichtblaue Blume"; "Er sah nichts als die blaue Blume" (I.197) ("But what intensely attracted him, was a tall, light-blue flower"; "But he saw the blue flower alone", 26; slightly modified). In the succession of events throughout the dream, though, there is nothing to indicate a connection of sequence and *telos*; the logic of the dream is not based on an accumulative causality, but appears eruptive and wonderful. Wonderful in the sense of Novalis's aesthetic is thus revealed through the flower's figuration of meaning as it, in responding to Heinrich's approaching, transforms as well. It doesn't function as a static symbol of wonderful, transcendent meaning—as often asserted in the established scholarship—but presents instead an ambiguous field of wonderful attraction and displacement of content. It operates as a barred sign that doesn't clearly show its meaning but still allegorically evokes a meaning that is different from itself, which the novel explicitly reflects in the flower's figural correspondence to Mathilde, Heinrich's love to be. Necessarily, the dream breaks off at its culmination, stylistically in one and the same sentence: "Sein süßes Staunen wuchs mit der sonderbaren Verwandlung, als ihn plötzlich die Stimme seiner Mutter weckte" (I.197). ("His delightful astonishment was increasing with this singular change, when suddenly his mother's voice awoke him", 26). But still, the dream remains as an opening of an inexplicable wonderful meaning.

Second, on the level of narration, the novel works through two perspectives: Heinrich's never-ending approximation to a new understanding of reality and its hidden, infinite dimensions, *and* the literary form of the novel as a way of trying to show the concrete appearances in the text from the perspective of infinity. In the beginning of the novel, the hermeneutical premise for understanding the novel's figuration of events is stated; the so-called "romantische Ferne" (I.203) ("[romantic] distance", 35) is the permanent distant and thus endlessly approximable direction of searching, and the anonymous narrator indicates that the time of events around 1200 is a time open for higher meaning: "In allen Übergängen scheint, wie in einem Zwischenreiche, eine höhere, geistliche Macht durchbrechen zu wollen" (I.204) ("In all transitions, as in an interregnum, it appears as if a higher spiritual power were revealing itself", 35–36).[13] This, however, is not only explicitly formulated as a poetics for understanding the novel, but is implicitly worked out in the interplay of character and narrative form.

One the one hand, we have a character led through the human dynamics of an infinitely expanding consciousness. Heinrich learns to see the world anew, whereby he himself and the world are set to inaugurate a mutually transformative process; the world changes as Heinrich sees it differently, partly through his own imagination, and Heinrich changes his perception according to the changed world. On the other hand, the novel itself tries to transgress the boundaries of Heinrich's individuality in an attempt to become itself a projector of wonderful light upon events and appearances throughout the novel. Novalis makes this point in a note:

> Elemente des Romantischen. Die Gegenstände müssen, wie die Töne der Aeolsharfe daseyn, auf einmal, ohne Veranlassung-ohne ihr Instrument zu verrathen (Novalis III.558)
>
> (Elements of the Romantic. The things have to, like the tone of an Aeolian harp, just to be there, at once, without cause—without revealing its instrument)

As Heinrich gets closer to grasping poetry as a medium for the absolute, the novel inversely loosens its control over events, the narrator disappears, and the plot in a rhetoric of estrangement dissolves in lapses and discontinuities where we as readers lose the overview of the causality of events inside a rhetoric of estrangement. The steering principle of the narrative recedes into the background and the events are there, just at once,

without cause', or to be more precise, the steering principle appears as wonderful in its withdrawal. What then leads Heinrich, or how is he led, from the celebration in Augsburg in the first part of the novel, "Die Erwartung", to his new existence as a pilgrim in the second, unfinished part, "Die Erfüllung"? Further, how is this expectation fulfilled?

The point is that the novel seeks transformation through Heinrich's imaginative perception of the world and through the readers' understanding of the sequence of events. Thus, it seeks an *epistemological transfiguration* where the categories of our understanding of the world's being are put to their limit so as to reveal that the other side of limitation is the unlimited; in Novalis' view, this is the infinite and absolute. In the crossing of finite and infinite perspectives, the novel tries hermeneutically to lead its reader on a path of learning to see the world at once as natural *and* full of wonderful meaning.[14]

IV

With Keats we encounter something quite different. The descriptive setting in Novalis's aesthetic has a tendency toward transparency in its revelation of another dimension of meaning (thus, as well, the 'flatness' of character and plot in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*), even though this meaning doesn't necessarily appear with clarity. Keats's poems have, in general, a very different kind of opaque and material texture. Keats is a sensuous poet, staying within the boundaries of the material given, which expresses itself in his insistence that death is a non-transcendable condition of human existence. Thus, Jack Stillinger in his 1961 article "The Hoodwinking of Madeline: Skepticism in *The Eve of St. Agnes*" claims that every kind of dreaming or "fairy-tale imagery" is condemned in Keats's work, and that the crux of Keats's poetics is founded on the belief that "an individual ought not to lose touch with the realities of this world" (88). This certainly is one dimension of Keats's aesthetic, but as he directly and boldly states in the sonnet "'Why did I laugh tonight? ...'" (1819), it might be that death is more intense than "Verse, Fame, and Beauty", "Death is Life's high meed"; still though, it is possible to spread "My fancy to its utmost blisses" (9–14). In a later article, "Keats, Wordsworth, and 'Romanticism'" (1971), Stillinger allows Keats to represent the visionary capacity of imagination in contrast to Wordsworth's 'naturalized imagination' upon a solely empirical basis; "the concern with

the visionary imagination may be taken as Keats's central theme" (141), not as a perspective of transcendence but within the context of reality: Keats "employs imagination as a basis, not for poetry, but for taking attitudes about life in the actual world" (144).

There should be no doubt that the visionary in Keats—see "Ode to a Nightingale" (1819)—is circumscribed by the boundaries of human finitude. Still, Keats is working more intensely on an expanding understanding of these boundaries than is noticeable at first glance. This, however, is not to be understood as a search for a purely otherworldly transcendence in the sense indicated in Ford or Wasserman,[15] but as a testing of the ontological validity of vision and of the visionary. Keats not only knows that the imaginary dimension of dreaming and vision can show new and hitherto unrealized parts of reality as Stillinger says, but he seeks also to explore the poetic imaginary as a borderline of empirical experience and imagination's transcending liberty and "synthetical and magical power" (Coleridge II.16). Instead of just adapting given dogmas of inner and outer reality, of immanence and transcendence, Keats's poems try out new ways of interchanging the real and the imaginary, thus altering their relation and character in search for a new kind of poetic gaze.

"Lamia" can thus be read as a figuration of this new poetic gaze. In this poem, the Corinthian shepherd Lycius is seduced by the serpent-woman Lamia who is in love with him. At the beginning she is in a mythological space without human beings. The god Hermes transforms her from a snake into a woman. She then seduces Lycius in the human world and tries to isolate him from it in a magical "purple-lined palace of sweet sin" (II.31). Lycius is, however, restless and wants to return to his familiar world to present Lamia as his bride. At the bridal feast, Lycius' mentor, the philosopher Apollonius, appears and with his "fixed" (II.246) eye as a "sharp spear [...] / Keen, cruel, perceant, stinging" (II.300f.) he ends the double illusion of Lamia; Lamia herself being illusory being transformed into a human shape, "A woman's shape" (I.118), and Lycius having a false perception of Lamia. In the end, "with a frightful scream she vanished" (II.306), whereupon Lycius dies.

The poem could be read as an allegory of the impossibility of illusion, visionary or not, in the human world, and it has in this way been regarded as one of Keats's most skeptical poems. This, however, is a reading identifying itself with the position of Lycius. If we focus on Lamia, the result is different. As the chief character in the text, the metamorphosed serpent

Lamia transgresses the boundary of the two distinct realms of the poem: the supernatural realm of the Greek gods and the mundane realm of Lycius' Corinthian world. In the supernatural realm she is created as woman in a double transfigurative process of destruction and re-creation, of dissolving and new becoming anew. The methodology of this reverse process is described by the poem's anonymous narrator:

> Do not all charms fly
> At the mere touch of cold philosophy?
> There was an awful rainbow once in heaven:
> We know her woof, her texture; she is given
> In the dull catalogue of common things.
> Philosophy will clip an Angel's wings,
> Conquer all mysteries by rule and line,
> Empty the haunted air, and gnomèd mine—
> Unweave a rainbow, as it erewhile made
> The tender-personed Lamia melt into a shade. (II.229ff.)

This passage is often read as a critique of the too-rational philosophy that destroys all the mysteries and secrets of the world, of "consequitive reasoning" as it is named in one of Keats's early letters (I.185). However, these lines are not only some kind of ideological statement but they also indicate a poetics of '*unweaving*' centered around Lamia as an aesthetic figure. Lamia is transfigured through this process at the intersection of illusion and reality; that is, she herself is the medium for the poem's transfiguration. On the aesthetic level of the poem, Lamia reflects the poetic process of, on the one hand, constructing a radical meaning transgressing different spheres of reality and, on the other, of this construction's ontological instability. In the poem, Lamia is constantly on the verge of melting or being made into a shade. The point is that Keats confronts the aesthetic complications of *ontological transfiguration*, where realms of reality are transgressed and reality and illusion clash. The consequence is, necessarily, the breakdown of illusion. Keats is well aware of poetry's inability to maintain the impossible. But *still* he seeks, experimentally, to explore the dimensions and forms of representations of this impossible. Read in this way, the poem is not merely an allegory of the impossibility of illusion—there is simply too much fascination for the concrete shapes of illusion, that is, of its possible forms.

In his masterpiece, the unfinished *The Fall of Hyperion. A Dream* (1819), Keats carries this process further. The question of reality's different dimensions here, as in most of Keats's greater poems, is formulated as a dualism of mortality and immortality, is not, as in "Lamia", distributed on two ontologically different characters, a mortal and an immortal, but staged as different forms of internalization in the lyrical subject. In a rough sketch, the lyrical subject in the poem (not to be identified with Keats even if "he" often has been) sets out to enter a dreamscape where he falls asleep and thed awakens finding himself in a strange setting of old deserted ruins, later to be specified as the ruins of one of the temples of Saturn, a Titan conquered in the 'War of Heaven' by the new and rising God Apollo. In yet another radical process of double transformative dreaming, the lyrical subject arrives at a place and situation that logically must be a part of his own dream, falso indicated by the poem's subtitle *A Dream*, but unfolds independently of the subject. The poem in this way blurs the borderlines of the possibilities of internalization as limited by the subject's own consciousness and an externalization of this inner space, which clearly transgresses what could be possible if the poem's dream were circumscribed solely by the consciousness of the lyrical subject.[16] In the sequence of events, the subject meets the veiled goddess Moneta who introduces him to their actual situation after the fall of the Titans, the rise of Apollo, and the expected rebellion of the Titan Hyperion. The poem is not a poem of action[17] but rather, in Part I and II, a medium of discursive meditations on mortality vs. immortality, dreamers vs. poets, and so on preparing the lyrical subject for his own narrative unfolding of the mythological story of Apollo's deification in the unfinished Part III. That is, the text can be read as a *rite de passage* forthe lyrical subject as the creative poet of the 'War in Heaven'. The text is thus itself creating the creative poet and has often been read metapoetically as Keats's own self-reflection as a poet. The crucial moment in the text is the subject's discovery of a new kind of vision. Moneta leads to a scene, where:

> [I] saw, what first I thought an image huge,
> Like to the image pedestalled so high
> In Saturn's temple. Then Moneta's voice
> Came brief upon mine ear: 'So Saturn sat
> When he had lost his realms'. Whereon there grew
> A power within me of enormous ken
> To see as a God sees, and take the depth

Of things as nimbly as the outward eye
Can size and shape pervade. The lofty theme
At those few words hung vast before my mind,
With half-unravelled web. I set myself
Upon an eagle's watch, that I might see,
And seeing ne'er forget. (I.297–310)

'To see as a God sees' indicates a rather extreme poetics of seeing. In the further development of the text, it also becomes clear that the vision of a god is difficult to situate within a human character: the ideological statement of god-like vision is one thing, the concrete literary and temporal-rhetorical realization is another. Rather than posing the becoming of a visionary poet—the lyrical subject also denies being identified with one (see I.193–94)—the text, in my opinion, uses the whole internalized-externalized setting and the meeting with an immortal to interrogate the possibilities of seeing. The subject's very vision is thus put forward in terms of an epistemological conflict of inner vision ('take the depth / Of things') and outer perception ('outward eye'), and thereby, remains unresolved as a pure exteriorization of inner vision. Even as the 'image huge' of Saturn, through the mediation of Moneta's voice, is transubstantiated as 'theme' and 'words' and thus finds its way into the 'mind' of the lyrical subject, the formulation of a 'half-unravelled web' is not only far from the transparency of vision assumed in a god's transcendental view, but also puts forth an image of the complexities of the transfigurative processes of the subject's mind. It might be that the seeing subject receives a vision as a god but the point is that this vision in no way is divinely constituted with an inner power or a homogenizing internalization of the world's heterogeneity.[18] Keats resists making apparent an easy outward route from the inside of mind but only suggests that it *does* exist, as expressed in the full range of complexities of the mind's 'half-unravelled web'. This is a moment of the subject's self-reflection and self-envisioning; where the subject sees *how* it sees. Where, as Hartman states it, the otherwise "'invisible poet' discovers his presence" and turns from "absorbed looking", being entirely amazed by the mythological scenery, to "spectral confrontation" (64f.). The emphasis must then be placed on 'seeing' (even though I will avoid speaking of a "poet" as Hartman does): 'To *see* as a God sees'.

In *The Fall of Hyperion,* Keats employs aesthetic schemata in a two-fold manner. First, on the level of the protagonist, the text allows the lyrical subject's 'seeing as a God sees' to be circumscribed by the limitations of human finitude, as he says when in a confrontation with the frozen shapes of the gods Thea and Saturn says: "Without stay or prop / But my own weak mortality, I bore / The load of this eternal quietude" (I.388ff.). Keats thus displays a heroic version of the human subject—being able to stay within the human world of mortality (also as suffering and pain) and still bear confrontations with the immortal figures (i.e. using an imagination that enables human consciousness to elevate itself and thus 'see as a God sees').[19]

Second, as an aesthetic configuration, the text posits the protagonist as a locus in the crossing of mortal and immortal perspectives. That is, through elevating the subject's kind of vision, the text aims at establishing a new kind of poetic discourse between human mortality and divine immortality, reality and dream, life and the transgression of life—a kind of poetic discourse that in challenging ontological boundaries attempts at positing tentative 'Guesses at Heaven', to use an expression from the beginning of the text (I.4). As Novalis, in his figuration of an aesthetic model of utopian integration, is led through a process of epistemological transfiguration (and becomes aware of the impossibility and non-closure of his attempt), so Keats, when he posits the reflexive drama of never-reaching the impossible as the center of his poems, becomes "aware." His model of ontological transfiguration allows him, however, with the consciousness of human limitation, to transgress reality and either present Lamia as a possible figuration of the impossible or try, in *The Fall of Hyperion,* to let the lyrical subject be the locus of this impossible figuration.

V

Under the influence of the Romantic movement in Germany, Swedish Romanticism surfaced through a harsh confrontation with neoclassical aesthetics that dominated the eighteenth century and was institutionalized in the Svenska Akademien (the Swedish Academy) founded in 1786 by King Gustav III on the model of the Académie française (1635).[20] Schelling is an especially important source for new reflections on the nature of poetry at this time, as when the leading aestheticist in the group of phosphorists, Per Daniel Amadeus Atterbom (1790–1855), in the journal *Phosphoros,* writes about 'bildningskraften' ("power to shape", a translation of Schelling's "Dichtungskraft"), which in art not only makes "ren subjektivitet objektif" ("objectifies pure subjectivity"), but most of

all comes to expression in "det fullkomligaste uttryck av konsternas gemensamma själ (*PoihsiV*, den skapande kraften) Poesien" (580) ("the most perfect expression of the common soul of the arts (*PoihsiV*, the creative force), *poetry*").

Stagnelius does not directly represent this aesthetic movement—not only does he write approximately ten years after the era of the Phosphoros movement, he is most of all a *loner*,[21] geographically, mentally, and aesthetically—but *Phosphoros* forms a central part of the background for his literary achievements along with a strong religious influence from psalm books and Gnosticism, his own adaptations of Schelling and Fichte, Nordic mythology, and neoclassical prosody,[22] to mention a few. Stagnelius's poetry is mostly set within a strong dualism of the earthly and the heavenly, which infuses his poetry with desire for transcending the earthly but, in a paradoxical reversal of this position, also leads to a radical intensification of the sensual to a degree that it often touches upon an almost sensual nihilism. This has something to do with his personal, Gnostic inspired cosmology that doesn't necessarily posit the heavenly as a given, metaphysical entity with the name 'God', but unfolds through polarities of 'being' and 'appearance', of 'unity' and 'multiplicity', and of metaphysics and nothingness. In the metaphysical teaching poem "Tingens natur" (1820) ("The nature of the thing"), Stagnelius, for example, states (with inspiration from Plotinius) that unity can only be found through finite forms that "i Tid och Rum [...] Sprida sig tallöst ut i ett brutet växlande skimmer" (II.119, ll.97–98) ("in Time and Space [...] spreads out numberless in a broken, changing glittering"); the point being: "Enhet sättes ej kan så framt ej dess eviga motsats / Mångfald äfven är satt" (II.122, ll.185–86) ("Unity cannot be posited unless not its eternal opposite / Multiplicity even is posited"). Interrelating unity and multiplicity is, however, not enough for Stagnelius. Using the metaphor of the mirror, Stagnelius discusses the refractions of the unity or infinite in the appearances of the finite and asks what mirror can reflect God and thus comprehend his beauty without distortion. The answer is boldly stated:

> [...] Det tomma, det ödsliga Intet,
> Skaldernas chaos, den heliga natt, som Guderna födde,
> Är följaktligen ock det himmeska Varandets spegel,
> Är den skiljande vägg, mot hvilken det eviga Ljuset
> Bryter sin lefvande glans i ett ändlöst skiftande färgspel. (II.121, ll.146–150)
>
> ('The empty, the desolate Nothing / The chaos of Poets, the holy night, that gave birth to the Gods / Is thus also the mirror of heavenly Being, / Is the separating wall, against which the eternal Light / Breaks its living radiance in a unending changing play of colors)

It is one thing to claim that the original unity of existing forever will be "i sit heliga mörker fördold" (II.120, l.128) ("hidden in its sacred darkness") categorically different from human existence. It is far more radical to follow the implications of reversing the polarities of metaphysical presence and nothingness: instead of, in the sense of Plotinius, having a metaphysical substance emanating the concrete material multiplicity of the world, we have nothingness *grounding* unity. The world, in this way, lacks stability and is, due to its origin in the "svarta, ödsliga Intet" (II.121, l.168) ("the black, desolate Nothing"), on the verge of destruction even as the metaphysical reign of "Kärlekens thron [...] Nådens och Sanningens rike" (II.121, l.161) ("the throne of love, the kingdom of mercy and truth") is.

The point is twofold. First, Stagnelius's cosmology has at its core an idiosyncratic conception of an original nothing and a being striving to become.[23] Second, this functions as the basis for Stagnelius's specific kind of *onto-epistemological* transfiguration where poetic language is employed to develop new ways of understanding that, in the end, contain the potential for a new condition of the world, of letting the impossible be a part of the possible. This is not in the pragmatic sense of the critic Martin Seel, but in the utopian sense of Adorno: the impossible can never actually *be* possible, but—to use the metaphorical language of Stagnelius—it can shed its dark light on (and through) the possible. When "Idéen är alltid högra än symbolen, det betecknade mera vidtomfattande än det betecknande" (IV.317) ("the idea is higher than the symbol, the signifier more comprehensive than the signified"), representation is constitutively problematic; however, the symbol, whereby Stagnelius means sensual representation, can productively provide a challenge (Stagnelius speaks of "gåta", riddle) for the understanding, because it doesn't "äga sin förklaringsgrund inom sig sjelf" ("own the grounds of explanation within itself"): The symbol can "bibringa det reflecterande förståndet icke ett klart begrepp, uten en dunkel aning; den är slöjan, icke gestalten; gryningen icke dagen" (IV.316) ("convey to reflecting

understanding not a clear concept, but an obscure presentiment; it is the veil, not the figure; the dawn, not the day"). Poetry can thus be the medium for a process of *veiling* that at once opens a field of wonderful meaning and at the same time bars it.

The configuration of cosmology based on nothingness and the search for a transfiguration of understanding that at the same time is a transfiguration of being can be seen in the short poem entitled "'Vän! I förödelsens stund'" ("Friend! In the time of desolation") (after 1818). In the first ten lines, the poem describes a situation of loss, mourning and complete meaninglessness where the sense of nothing is so strong that even "Hjärtat ej sucka kan, ögat ej gråta förmår" ("the heart cannot long, the eye cannot cry"). In the last six lines, the poem answers the question of how to escape this situation:

> Endast det mäktiga Väsen, som först ur den eviga natten
> Kysste Seraphen till lif, solarna väckte till dans.
> Endast det heliga Ord, som ropte åt verldarna: »Blifven!»—
> Och i hvars lefvande kraft verldarna röras ännu.
> Därföre gläds, o vän! och sjung i bedröfvelsens mörker:
> Natten är dagens mor, Chaos är granne med Gud. (II.54, II.11–16)
>
> (Only the powerful being who, out of eternal night / First kissed the seraph to life, woke up the suns to dance. / Only the holy Word that cried to the worlds: "stay"— / And in whose living power the worlds move still. / Hence, rejoice, o friend! and sing in the darkness of sorrow: / Night is the mother of day, Chaos the neighbor of God.)

Not only does the poem confirm the idea of an original nothingness, that is also the reason for the experience of hopelessness, it also tries to interpret this nothing as a power of being that out of the eternal night can create not only a new heavenly life (the seraph and the sun) but also provide a certain dynamism of speech in the "holy word that cried to the worlds: 'stay'". This word can, of course, be read as a repetition of God's original positing of the world, but even so, it has, in Engdahl's metapoetical reading of the poem, the character of an attempt to try to rule out the fundamental nothingness of the world through the poetic word (161), whereby the poetic word replaces God as the producer of original meaning and eliminates the threat of nothingness. It is, however, not enough to understand the processes of the poetic word; it not only distances itself to a nothing that thus gets displaced, but it also tries to put forward a new

understanding in the meeting of otherwise incompatible pairs of oppositions. When it is written "Night is the mother of the day, Chaos is the neighbor to God", we see not only the circular and ontological intricacy of night and day,[24] Chaos (in the Greek sense of an original gap), and God but, more interestingly, the poem puts forward a non-equal equation of the concrete and abstract. The result is an aesthetic paradigm of seeing anew in the crossing of the concrete and circular progression of day and night with the metaphysical correlation of Chaos and God. The poem, then, is at one and the same time very clear in its expression and also points to a ground for this equation that remains hidden as an "obscure presentiment": it is "the veil, not the figure" of the signified.

The poem's straight-forward presentation of its thematic proposition—a stylistic hallmark of Stagnelius—is also dominant in the poem "Endymion" (after 1821). The poem is seemingly written without knowledge of Keats's romance and shows a very different texture and unfolding of plot. Whereas Keats's poem is long and follows Endymion's wanderings *in* different more or less wonderful and supernatural regions densely described in an almost opaque richness of sensual details, Stagnelius's poem is brief (twenty-four lines), keeping the worlds of Delia (as Cynthia/Diana is called here) and of Endymion apart from each other and employing a transparent texture that directly presents the unresolvable conflict of the poem. In the last two stanzas:

> Tystna, suckande vind i trädens kronor!
> Rosenkransade Brud på saffransbädden
> Unna herden att ostörd
> Drömma sin himmelska dröm.
>
> När han vaknar en gång, hvad ryslig tomhet
> Skall hans lågande själ ej kring sig finna!
> Blott i drömmar Olympen
> Stiger till dödliga ned. (I.354, II.17–24)
>
> (Please be quiet, sighing wind in the crown of the tree! / Rosewreathed bride on the bed of saffron / Grant the shepherd composure / To dream his heavenly dream. / When he at some time awakes, what horrifying emptiness / Won't his lying soul find around itself / Only in dreams, Olympus / Descends to the mortal.)

The poem's anonymous narrator urges the morning not to disturb Endymion as the goddess only descends to him in his dreams. Thematically, then, Delia is limited within the frame of Endymion's dream and—seen from an earthly perspective—can only exist there as an illusory interiority. The poem can thus be read as an allegory of the modern experience man's detachment from direct contact with metaphysics; when Endymion awakens, there will only be a "ryslig tomhet", a horrifying emptiness. Further, Stagnelius shares Keats's anthropological premise on human limitation as an inescapable limitation for poetry, even if his experience of Romantic rupture is more intense as his utopia aims at a distant and unattainable religion, which in its nature not only transcends human limitation and anthropology but also radically would annihilate it. In this poem, Stagnelius not only demonstrates a clear insight into the impossibility of allowing the metaphysical sphere to interact with the mundane world, he boldly, and without the pain of disillusion, presents this insight as pure fact. This is, however, only one side of the story, one which follows the outer disposition of the poem. Seen within the poem, Delia is very much present in a physical and concrete sense:

> Stum, med smäktande blick och våta kinder
> Honom Delia ser från eterns höjder;
> Nu ur strålande charen
> Sväfvar hon darrande ned. (I.353, II.5–8)
>
> (Mute, with languorous gaze and wet cheeks / Delia sees him from the highs of Aether; / Now out of the splendid chariot / She is floating down, trembling.)

As she, according to myth, is the one who desires Endymion, she trembles with sensuality: full of silent, erotic expectation she floats downwards with "languorous gaze and wet cheeks". In her sensuality she transcends her being 'only dream', thus proposing a counter perspective in the poem, which indicates the reality of the gods.[25] More radically, as she is somehow real *but still* only a dream for Endymion, the dream is intensified as a medium for of an impossible possibility inaccessible to the reader. The two lines: "Only in dreams, Olympus / Descends to mortals" should thus be read literally: it only happens in dreams, but Olympus *does* descend to Endymion as a real action. Interestingly, it is an action whose full meaning, implications, and consequences remain hidden in the space of the poem. With this the reality of the action is at once stated as

factual and stands in a homologous relation to the immanence and non-revelation of the dream: we don't have access to the content of the action and the union of Delia and Endymion. Endymion's dreaming stays secretive in its inwardness—all we know is that his face has a flaming color, "lågande hy" (I.353, I.1).

The point of the poem, seen in the context of Stagnelius's onto-epistemological transfiguration, is that it is exactly this kind of immanence that carries with it the potential of an unrealizable and impossible transcendence. This transcendence not only provides a new kind of non-metaphysical way of experiencing a utopia within the poem, but figures a new kind of understanding of the inextricable connection of transcendence and immanence; it is only a dream, but it is still real. And in this doubleness can be located the heritage of the transfigurative mode of Romantic discourse as an inexhaustible resource *possibly* to be realized.

Notes

1. It is clear, thus, that 'Romanticism' is a very complex term, though often used in singular form about the heterogeneous literary and cultural period of the early nineteenth century. It is important to emphasize that the term is used in retrospect, which is obvious in the case of English Romanticism that neither was organized in literary groupings nor used the term itself. Still, if we accept the use of the term—as I myself will hereafter—as a way of designating certain historically founded literary phenomena, it is interesting to see what happens when a marginal phenomenon like Swedish Romanticism is added to the conventional understanding of the term. On a contrast of German and English Romanticism, see Wellek; on European Romanticism (including Scandinavian Romanticism), see Behler, *Die europäische Romantik*.

2. This story has, as well, been told more than once. For instance by Engel and Kearney; related to the concept of genius, see Schmidt.

3. Translations are here, as elsewhere, mine, unless indicated by a page reference to an existing translation, listed in works cited.

4. To this connection, see Brylla.

5. Kant does operate with metaphysics; it is just defined according to the borders of the knowledge subject. Kant in this way speaks of "Gott, Freiheit und Unsterblichkeit" (B7) ("GOD, FREEDOM (of will) and IMMORTALITY", 5) as functions of a metaphysics that are defined within the limits of the practical reason, that is, in relation to abstract ideas of reason, *Vernunft*, that cannot be directly verified through experience but only felt

as a moral sensation.

6. Even though Fichte in his rather extreme philosophy of knowledge, *Wissenschaftslehre*, had the tendency to place the 'absolute subject' as an undisputable center of epistemology, which in the Romantic period in Germany led to an obsession with the uttermost possibilities of human subjectivity—and later to Hegel's harsh critique of the "unendliche absolute Negativität" ("infinite, absolute negativity") in the Romantic's notion of subjectivity (98), as he, falsely, identified fichtean with Romantic subjectivity—the model of an extreme, world-creating subjectivity was never fully a part of Romanticism, but still, in the words of the Swedish scholar Anders Olsson, a dominant type of thinking of the period (18).

7. In this way, Romanticism appears an avant-garde movement. See also the seminal work on literary aesthetics in Early German Romanticism, Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy's *L'absolu littéraire* (1978), which, however, in my opinion exaggerates the dynamics of pure *auto-poeisis* in literature; for them, literature is solely about itself and its conditions as self-generating literary production.

8. This is the reason, as well, that Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht relates himself to Martin Seel in his post-hermeneutical approach in *The Production of Presence*; the work he relates to is Seel's basic theoretical reflection upon the structure of presence in the work of art, *Ästhetik des Erscheinens* (2000).

9. On romantic irony, see Strohschneider-Kohrs' classic study, *Die romantische Ironie in Theorie und Darstellung*, as well as Behler, *Irony and the Discourse of Modernity*.

10. Blanchot, in this way, speaks of an "absence as presence", that contains a "neutral double of the object in which all belongings to the world is dissipated" (262).

11. To this, see further Stadler's brilliant text, "Hardenbergs "poetische Theorie der Fernröhre"".

12. An example of this dynamics: "Mannichfaltige Zufälle schienen sich zu seiner Bildung zu vereinigen [...]. Alles was er sah und hörte schien nur neue Riegel in ihm wegzuschieben, und neue Fenster ihm zu öffnen" (I.267f.) ("Many coincidences appeared to be united in his education [...]. All he saw and heard appeared to remove even more crossbars and open new windows for him").

13. Further: "Wenn es wahr ist, daß erst eine geschickte Vertheilung von Licht, Farbe und Schatten die verborgene Herrlichkeit der sichtbaren Welt offenbart, und sich hier ein neues höheres Auge aufzuthun scheint" (I.204) ("If it is true that a proper division of light, color, and shade reveals the hidden splendor of the visible world, and opens for itself a new eye of higher character", 35) then it's worth, so is the novel's inherent logic, to insists on the middle ages a the novel's temporal setting.

14. To this doubling of meaning, see Schulz as well as Folkmann (173–184).

15. In *The Finer Tone* Wassermann for instance insists that Madeline and Porphyros in "The Eve of St Agnes" (1819) get transubstantiated and captured "in the dimensionless mystery beyond our mortal vision" (125). Ford posits Keats's aesthetics in a dynamics of prefigurative imagination of a higher truth with the nature of a "feelingful faith in the prefigurative veracity of blissful imaginings" (125ff.). Even if Ford is aware of the non-metaphysical and non-Platonic character of this higher truth as "modeled on his [Keats's, MNF] most treasured aesthetic experiences on earth", that is, they function as a direct "extensionalization" (88) of sensual experience, Ford still claims that Keats's main poetic guideline is a belief in a higher region of truth. Keats might have had a such at the time of the early work, for instance the 'poetic romance' *Endymion* (1818), even if *Endymion* in itself isn't unproblematic in its relation to a higher region (what can we do about Endymion's sheer disappearance in the end of the poem [IV.1002]?), Keats in the productive period of 1819 doesn't naively put forward such a belief.

16. Interestingly, Sartre claims that the imaginary is born with an essential poverty as it cannot transcend the consciousness that has set it: "l'objet de l'image n'est jamais rien de plus que la conscience: on ne peut rien apprendre d'une image qu'on ne sache déjà" (27) ("the object of the image is never more than consciousness: you already know what you can learn from an image"). Read as an imagining consciousness, the lyrical subject of *The Fall of Hyperion* doesn't abide to this theoretical premises. Seen in the context of other of Keats's poems presenting an imagining subjectivity, *The Fall of Hyperion* is very radical in letting the lyrical subjectivity be inextricably interwoven with the imaginary dreamscape of the text. Set in a more or less naturalistic setting, poems like "'I stood tip-toe'" (1816) and "Ode to a Nightingale" (1819) act out a dialogue of perception and imagination without challenging the status the physical surroundings or the lyrical subject, whereas a poem like "Ode to Psyche" places the lyrical subject wihin a entirely imaginated setting, meeting the mythological characters Psyche and Eros. Still, though, the lyrical subject in this poem is set in a distance to the actions of the poem, whereas the specificity of the setting of *The Fall of Hyperion* lies therein that it at once puts forward an purely imagined setting and lets the lyrical subject directly interact with it.

17. This stands partly in contrast to the earlier poem on Hyperion, the as well unfinished *Hyperion. A Fragment* (1819) which depicts an entirely mythological frame for the story about 'War in Heaven' between the fallen Titans under the former leadership of Saturn and the new rising God, Apollo. Seen in this way, *The Fall of Hyperion* is employed as a meta-poetical and displaced re-writing of the earlier text. This doesn't mean, however, that *Hyperion. A Fragment* is a poem of dynamic action; rather it displays Keats as a true master of non-action.

18. As exactly is the case with Apollo's deification in *Hyperion. A Fragment*: "Knowledge enormous makes a God of me. / Names, deeds, gray legends, dire events, rebellions, / Majesties, sovran voices, agonies, / Creations and destroyings, all at once / Pour into the wide hollows of my brain, / And deify me [...]" (III.113ff.).

19. In her post-deconstructive reading, Rajan in this way sees the viewing subject in *The Fall of Hyperion* doubled in a "immersive" perception being a part of a world of pain and suffering and a reflexive "distance" giving the possibility of elevating vision (196–97).

20. A curious detail is, that it is the very same Swedish academy that today is presenting the Nobel Prize in literature.

21. One of the other great writers of Swedish Romanticism, C.J.L. Almqvist (1793–1866), among other things the author of the ultimate frame narrative, *Törnrosens bok* (1833–1851) ('The Book of the Thorny Rose'), was also most of all an artist mainly in his own right, even leaving Romanticism in a reaching out for Realism.

22. In his ground-breaking work on the style in Stagnelius's poetry, Sten Malmström demonstrates Stagnelius's heritage from and complex relation to the Classicist aesthetics of the late 18th Century.

23. Some older scholarship does not, in my opinion, take the radical implications of nothingness into account. See for instance Holmberg for a study that presumes a rather dogmatic Christianity in the cosmogonic constructions of Stagnelius's poems.

24. Seemingly written without knowledge of Novalis's *Hymnen an die Nacht* (1800). The problem is, however, that we know very little about Stagnelius's readings and aesthetic sources. What is handed down is the poetic work consisting of a large corpus of poems and dramas, among the last the masterpiece *Bacchanterne* (1822), about 35 pages of mostly religious writings, and four (!) uninformative letters and notes. In his poems, Stagnelius blurs the references to other works so that it gets almost impossible to verify possible sources of influence.

25. The double perspective of a clear insight of the impossibility of the metaphysical and the attempt still to present it as existing, has the structure of an ironic reflection in the text. The poem thus posits an interrelation of "Selbstvernichtung" of its utopian dream, while at the same time in a "Selbstschöpfung" maintaining it. To an interesting reading of irony in Stagnelius, see Sjöholm, who places Stagnelius in an implicit dialogue of mental inwardness and communicative outwardness, as when the poetic text is transcending itself in a reaching out for a wider audience in a social context.

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MADS NYGAARD FOLKMANN is in the Department of Arts and Cultural Studies at the University of Copenhagen, and serves as an advisory board member of the Danish Society for Studies in Romanticism. His book *Figurationen des Übergangs* joins essays on Romantic authors and aesthetic theory.